



REVIEW OF ALLOCATION PLAN 2018 – 2020



SEPTEMBER 1, 2020
BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

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Operational Review of Allocations Plan

The Allocations Plan

The Allocations Plan as agreed by Members in December 2016 was

Homeless 40%

Transfers 30%

Homeseekers 20%

Council Interest Queue 10%

How it works

Properties are advertised on a two-weekly cycle throughout the year. Before the properties are advertised, they are each given a “priority” in accordance with the Allocations Plan.

This priority then forms part of the advert so applicants know which properties they can bid for. For example, “Priority to transfer applicants. No pets. Level area and access to secure door entry system. Lift. Gas central heating. Adapted level access shower. Within 50 metres of major bus routes. Within 1/4 mile of local shops and hospital. Restricted parking”

The properties are open for bids from Thursday to the following Wednesday in each cycle. At the end of each bidding cycle the properties are shortlisted. The first priority is to the queue that the property was advertised to. The highest band and longest priority date in this queue is checked against the Allocations Policy and if they meet the qualifying criterion the application is placed onto the shortlist of up to three candidates. This is sent to the Landlord who in turn will set up a viewing and potentially offer the property. If the property is refused by the top candidate for any reason the property will be offered to the next person on the list. If all three applicants refuse the offer, then a further shortlist “top up shortlist” is requested by the landlord. A top up shortlist will then supply a further three candidates until the property is let.

If there are no successful applicants that have placed a bid from the advertised queue, or no applicants qualify within the advertised queue, then the shortlist will consider applicants in the other three queues using the highest band and longest priority date to make up the shortlist. The same process as above will occur until the property is let.

When properties are let the result is monitored against the Allocations Plan. Adjustments can be made to the advertised queues to ensure the quotas in the plans are achieved.

Officers are required to report if any of the allocation queues deviate by more than 5% from the agreed Allocations Plan

Monitoring the Allocations Plan

The Allocations Plan is monitored by recording the number of properties that are allocated to each queue. The results records what happened to the property. The outcome can be

- Let to advertised queue
- Let to alternative queue
- Property withdrawn /re-advertised

Monitoring the allocations plan in this way allow for changes to be made to ensure that the allocations plan comes in on target at the end of the period.

Property withdrawn / re-advertised

In order to keep void properties to a minimum, Landlords advertise properties as soon as they have notice that they are becoming vacant. This includes properties that are already vacant such as abandoned properties but will also be properties that are still occupied but for example where the tenant has served notice to end the tenancy.

During the cycle tenants may sometimes withdraw their notice and the property will not therefore be available to re-let. Once properties are vacated they are then inspected, as part of the voids process, this will note any repairs or upgrades that are required such as rewiring. If the property requires a substantial amount of work, this will create a long delay until the property is of a lettable standard. When this happens the property will be withdrawn and re-advertised at a later date.

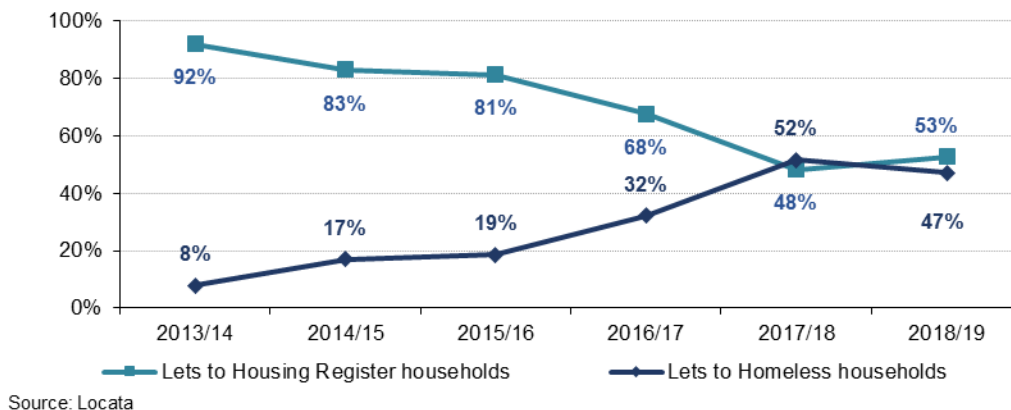
When the shortlist does not return anyone to let it to, the property will also be withdrawn and re-advertised in the next available bidding cycle.

Lettings prior to the Allocations Plan

Prior to the introduction of the Allocation Plan in 2016 social housing was let generally to the applicant in the highest band with the longest time in the band. This meant that there was no control over offers between different groups on the Housing Register.

Figure 1 Letting to Homeless and Homeseekers 2013/14 to 2018/19

**Brighton & Hove
Social Housing Lets**
(excludes transfers and mutual exchanges)



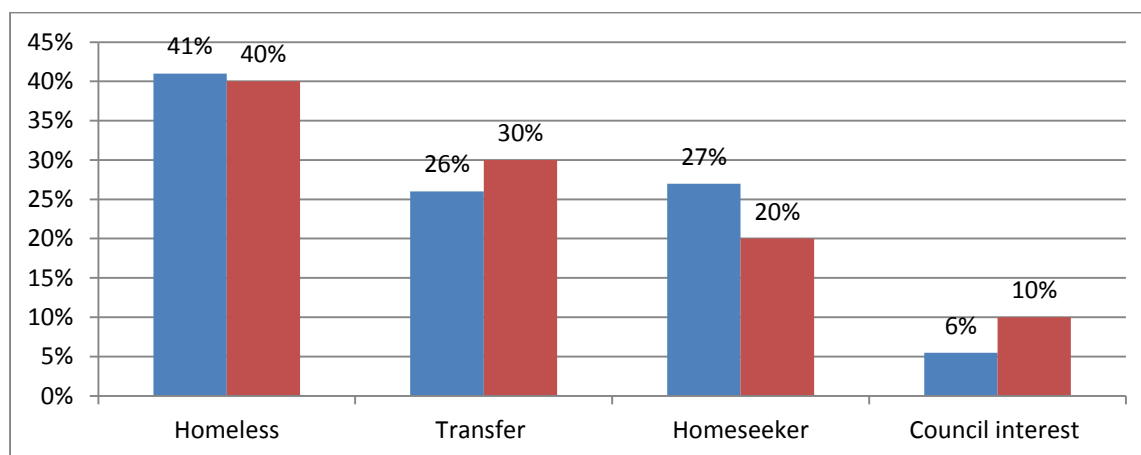
The figure above shows that in 2013/14 only 8% of lets went to homeless households. With changes in 2016/17 the percentage of lets to homeless households increased to 32% and in the last two financial years this has increased to 47%. Without the increase in lettings to homeless households on the register the number of households in temporary accommodation would be substantially higher than they are now.

Performance January 2017 to March 2018

The figure below shows the performance of lettings against the Allocations Plan from January 2017 to March 2018. This was reported to Housing Committee in line with the provisions of the Allocations Policy 2016.

Generally, the performance of the Allocations Plan was in line with the agreed targets.

Figure 2 Performance January 2017 to March 2018



Performance April 2018 to March 2019 by quarter

Figure 3 Performance April to June 2018

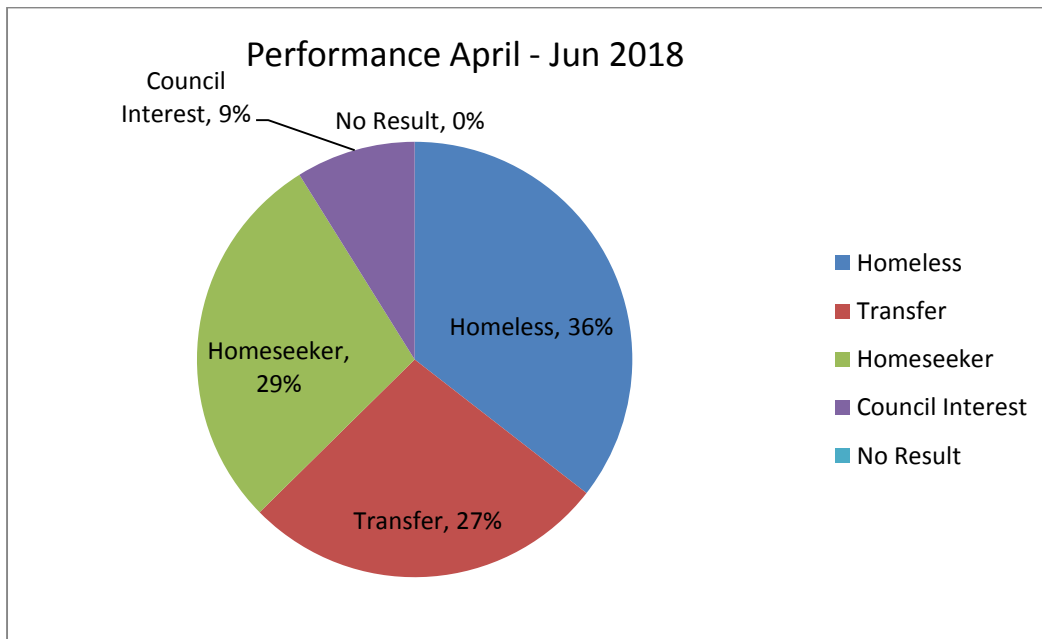


Figure 4 Performance July to September 2018

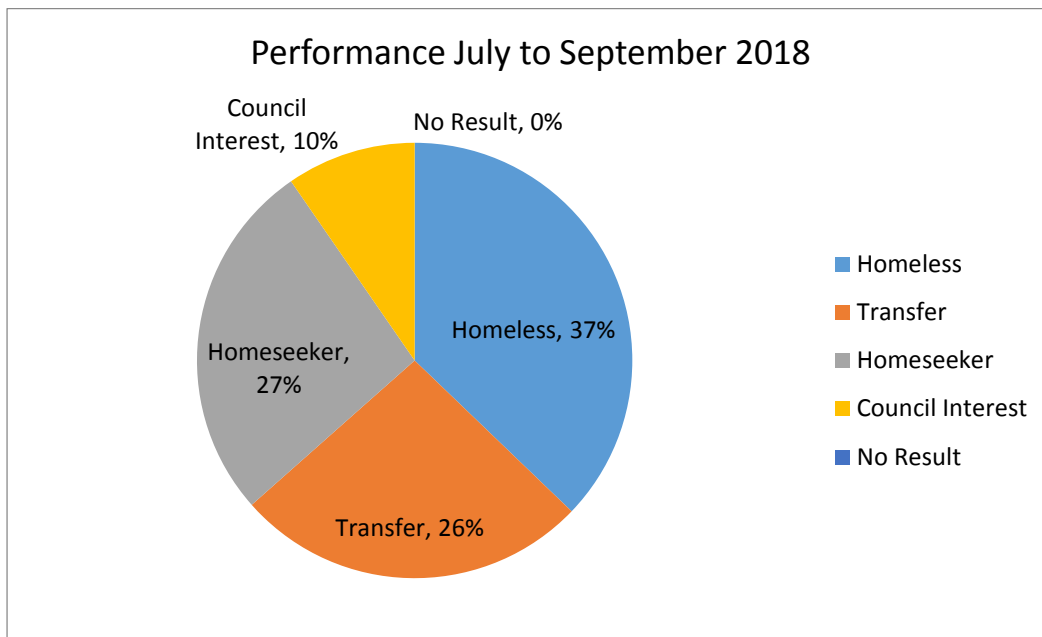


Figure 5 Performance October to December 2018

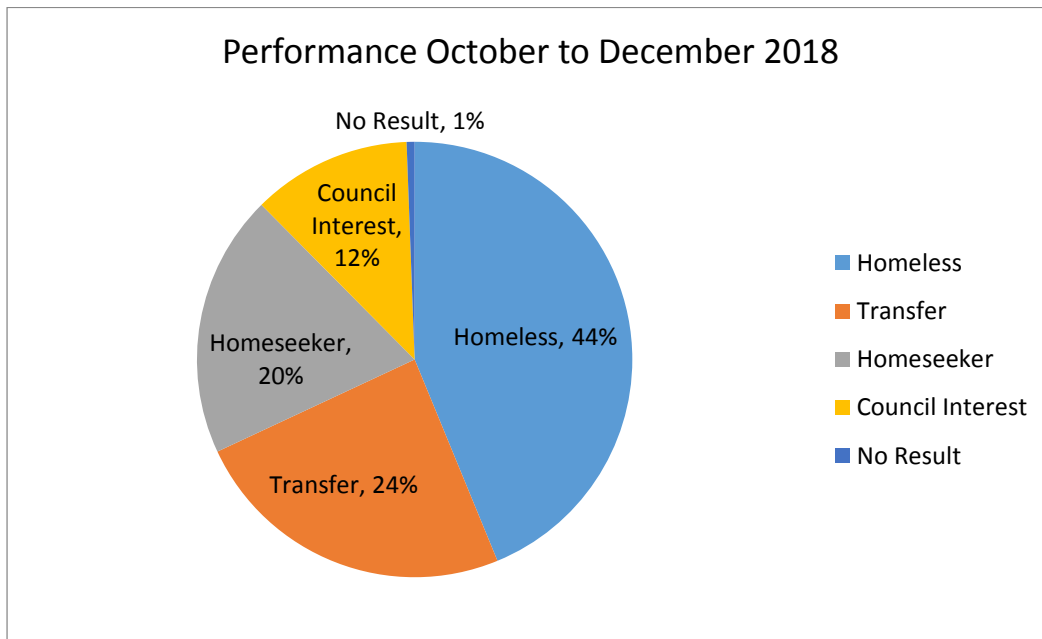
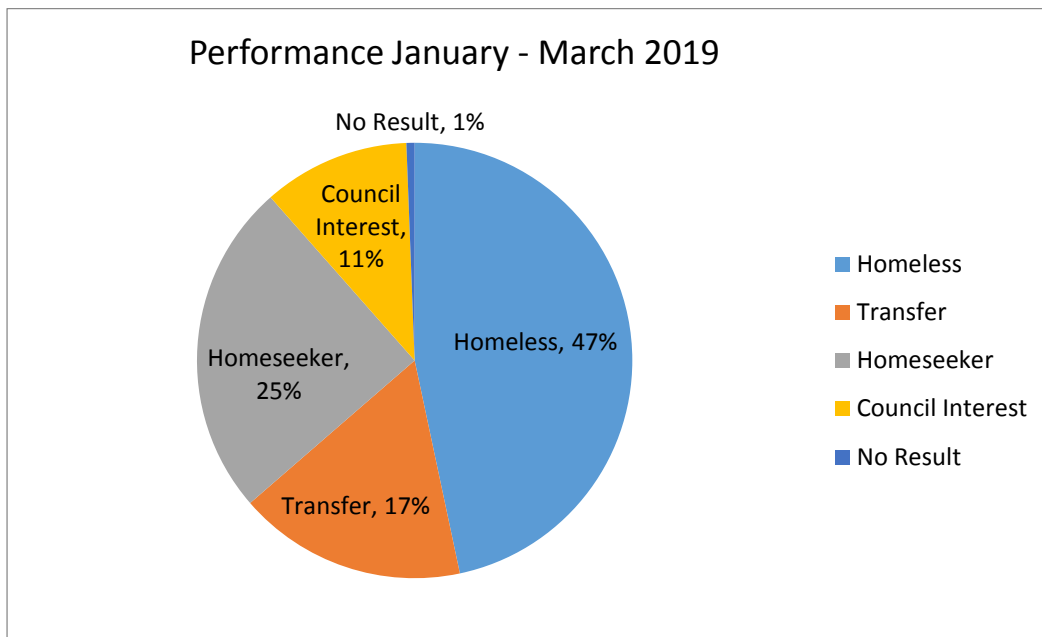
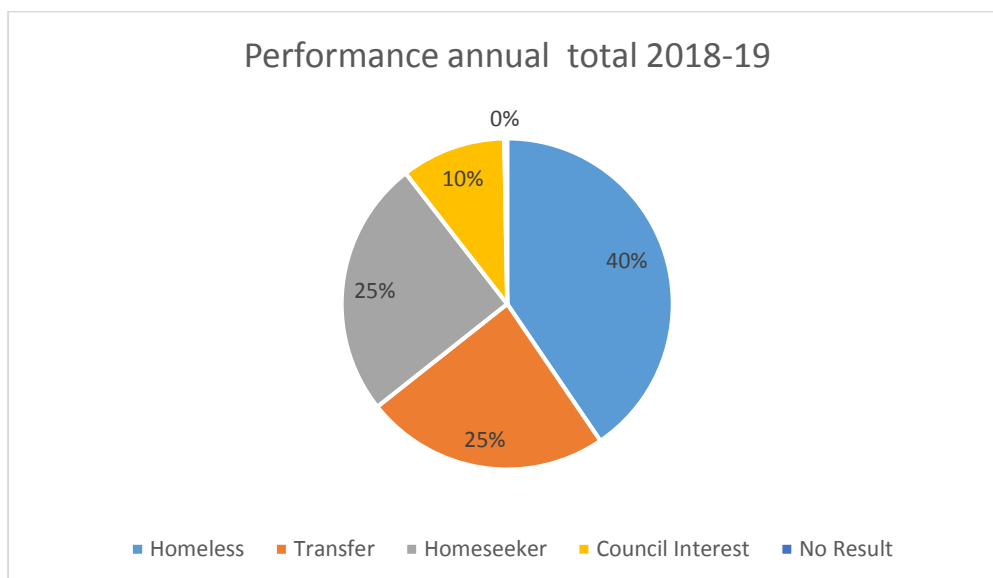


Figure 6 Performance January to March 2019



Annual Performance 2018-19

Figure 7 Annual Performance 2018 -19



The performance for the year 2018-19 shows that the lets to Homeless and the council's interest queue were on target. The lets to transfers was 5% points down on target and the lets to homeseekers was 5% up on target.

Variance report 2018

There is a requirement that if the performance against the allocated percentage of lets is more than a tolerance of 5% then a variance report is required to identify the reason of the variance.

Homeless and council's interest queues both performed in accordance with the Allocations Plan. The main issue is that the number of lets to transferring social tenants was 5% lower than the target of 30%. The main issue with transferring tenants is that they already have a social housing tenancy and they are therefore more likely to hold out for a property that they want to move to. There are also a high number of transferring tenants who are downsizing from family sized accommodation to smaller properties. The main issues for downsizers is that they are looking to remain in the same area and there is also a matter of costs to move and other associated costs such as new carpets or curtains for a new property. Although there is a tenants' incentive to enable them to move the financial incentive has not increased over recent years which we will review,

Performance 2019-2020

Performance April 2019 to March 2020 by quarter

Figure 8 Performance April to June 2019

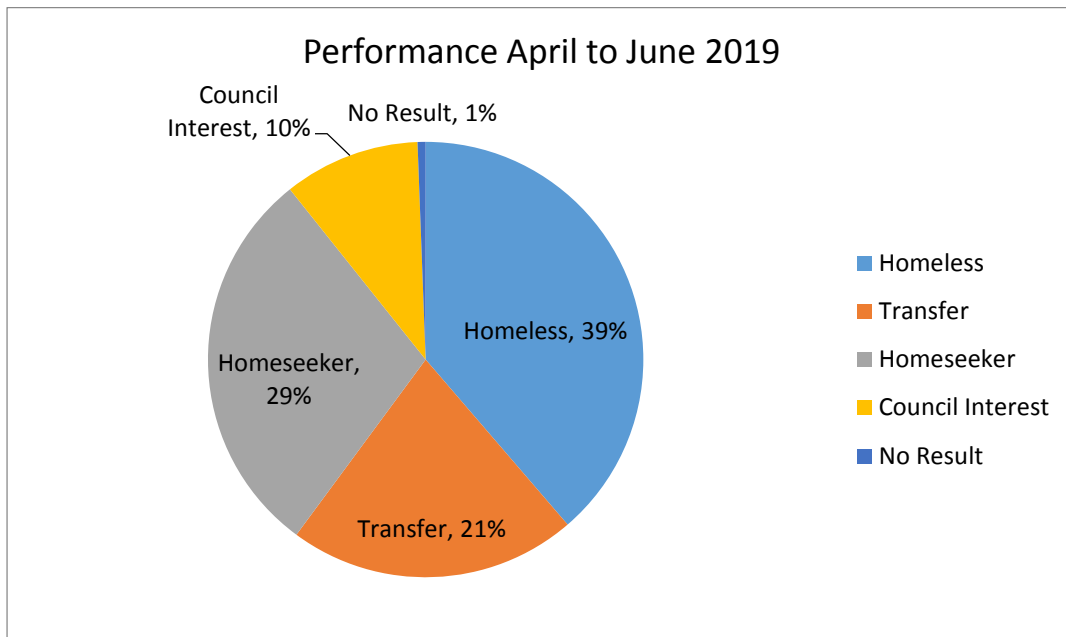


Figure 9 Performance July to September 2019

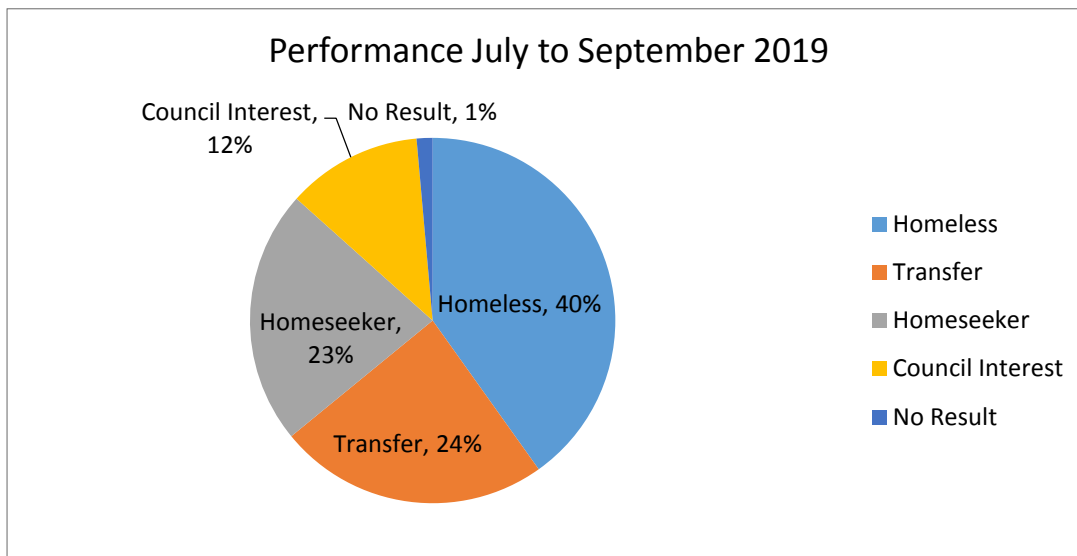


Figure 10 Performance October to December 2019

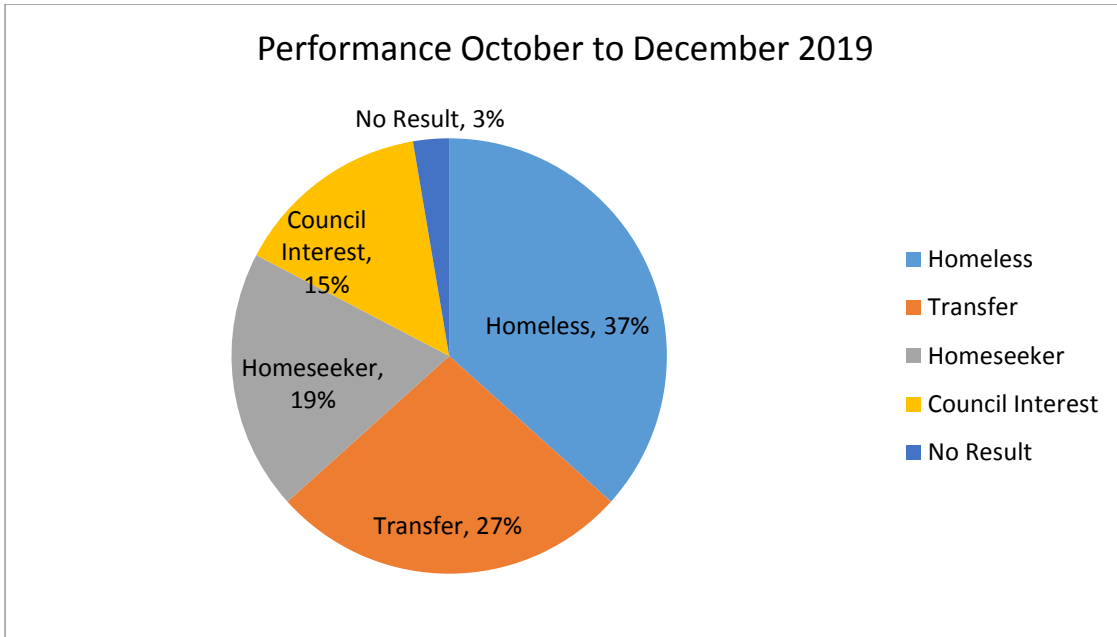
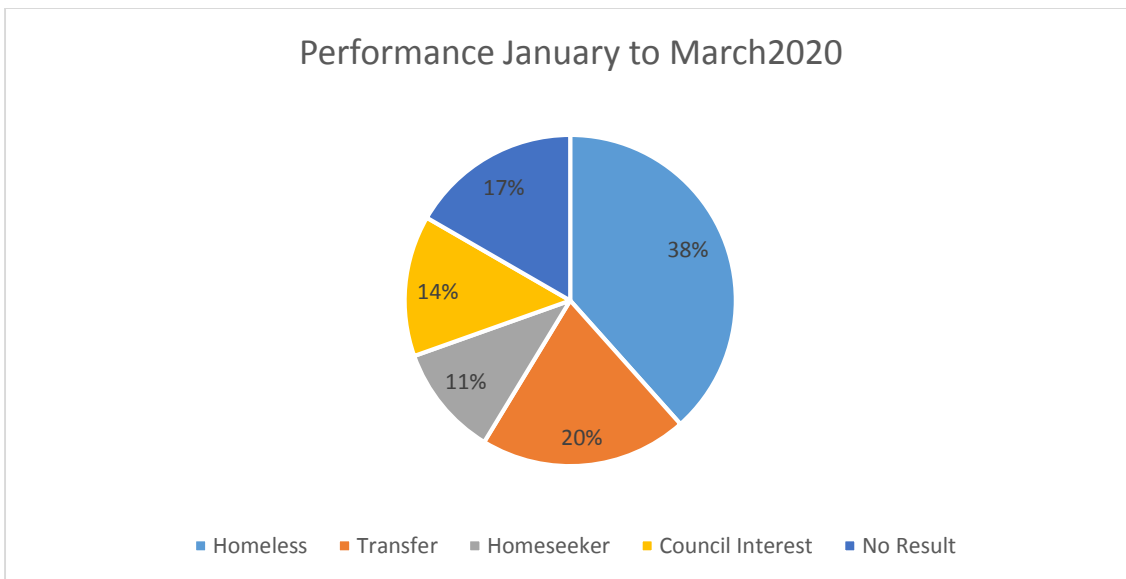
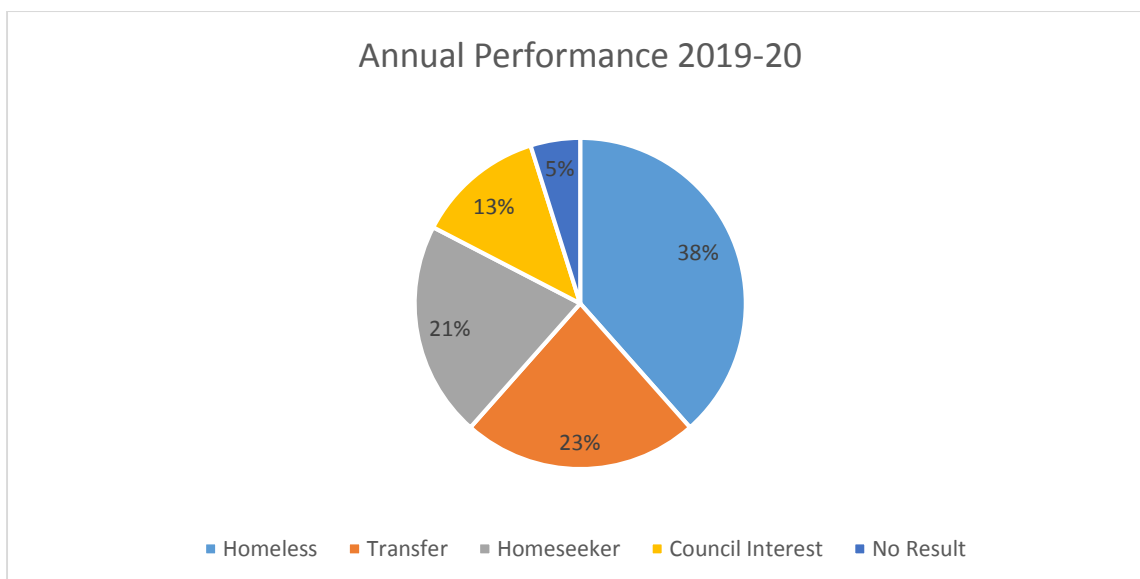


Figure 11 Performance January to March 2020



Annual Performance 2019-2020

The performance for 2019-20 has been severely disrupted because of Covid 19. This is particularly noted in the final quarter of the financial year January to March 2020. There were a number of properties that were advertised and then could not proceed due to the lockdown which is why there is a high percentage of properties with no result. As the lettings process has recommenced and properties are let, if they are let in line with previous results there is no reason why the out turn would not be in line with previous years' performance.



Variance Report 2019-20

The performance outturn for 2019-20 shows that there is a variance in the Homeless and transfers queue. The main reason for the underperformance in these areas is due to the large number of properties that have yet to be resulted. Two issues have led to this situation. First, there was a reduction in the number of properties advertised. This was due to a slowdown in properties being ready to let during the handover of the Mears repairs contract to the in-house provider. Second, the impact of Covid -19 during lockdown. In the final quarter of the year 5% of lettings are yet to be resulted by landlords. The council is working with landlord partners to work on a recovery plan for post lockdown as measures are relaxed. There may however still be some issues, for example where applicants need to shield or self-isolate, that may make the lettings process more challenging in future.

Recommendations for the Allocations Plan 2020/21

The current situation is unprecedented following the pandemic. The country has been on lockdown for several months and restriction of movements has impacted across many services including lettings and void management.

There has been a substantial increase in the number of homeless households that have been accommodated under the lockdown arrangements following the Government directive to ensure all rough sleepers were offered accommodation, coupled with the slow down of move on options.

The percentage lets must consider legislation and the statutory code of guidance. The council must give a reasonable preference to groups that are outlined in law and must have due regard to the code of guidance. In 2017 the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) dealt with a complaint against Brent Council. They had

ringfenced 80% of properties to the homeless on their register. They did not find fault that the council had provided for this within its policy. There is however some commentary that there was no challenge under the Equality Act in this case. Any fundamental change therefore would be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that it complies with the Act.

The Council has in place allocations agreements with Housing Associations. Currently the 30% of lets to transferring social housing tenants covers the allocations agreements. Reducing these to below 25% could have negative impacts for the agreements. The number of lets to transferring tenants in Housing Association properties is a lot lower than to council tenants due to the size of their stock.

The options are

1. The Allocations Plan to remain at current levels
2. Changes are made to increase one or more groups with corresponding decreases to other groups.

Considerations may be made to the performance since the introduction of the Allocations Plan in 2016 Homeseekers tend to over perform. This is because Homeseekers form the largest group on the Housing Register.

Issues for consideration

Consideration may be made to the substantial increase in the number of households in emergency and temporary accommodation due to Covid 19 and in particular in relation to rough sleepers and other single people who are not owed a statutory housing duty but who would have been rough sleeping during the pandemic. This has placed a significant budget pressure on the Council's General Fund Budget.

Increasing the percentage of lets to the Council's Interest Queue would enable rough sleepers currently accommodated who are tenancy ready or who would be provided with intensive support and those who are ready to move on from supported accommodation to move on into long term accommodation. This would release supported accommodation for those to move in and reduce numbers in emergency accommodation.

Option 1

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| 1. Homeless | 40% |
| 2. Transfers | 30% |
| 3. Homeseekers | 20% |
| 4. Councils interest Queue | 10% |

Option 2

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| 1. Homeless | 50% |
| 2. Transfers | 30% |
| 3. Homeseekers | 10% |
| 4. Councils Interest Queue | 10% |

Option 3

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| 1. Homeless | 40% |
| 2. Transfers | 30% |
| 3. Homeseekers | 10% |
| 4. Council's Interest Queue | 20% |

The council may wish to consider excluding any new build developments that are due to be let, outside of the Allocations Plan. This can be achieved by using a Local Lettings Plan, contained in the Allocations Policy. This would be done to achieve a balanced community in any new development. It could also be used to increase the number of under occupying tenants who would then release their existing accommodation back into the pool available to let.

In making changes to the Allocations Plan members may wish to consider the change for one year, or two years until further report is presented to members in 2022.

